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Latin America Review

24 November 1978

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LATIN AMERICA REVIEW

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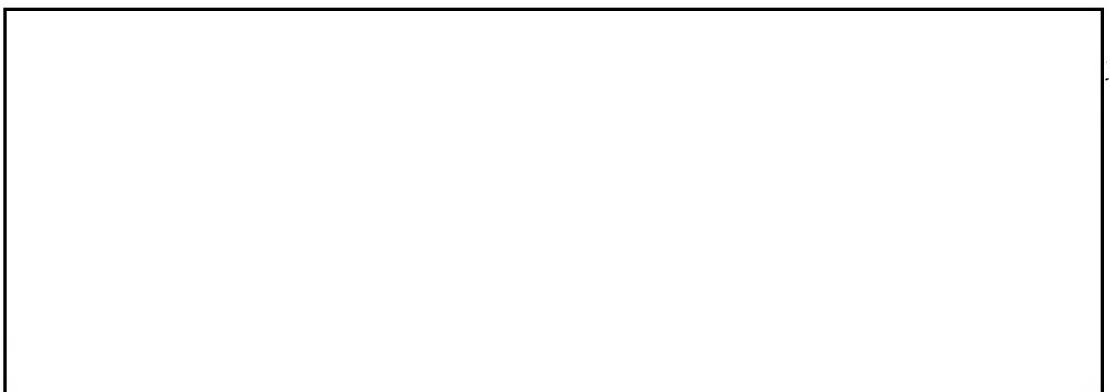
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Argentina-Chile: Stalemate in the Beagle Channel

1,6 Argentina and Chile have made no progress toward resolving their differences over the Beagle Channel despite their contention earlier this month that they were willing in principle to accept outside mediation. Neither country wants to give the impression that it is caving in to pressure and each is now accusing the other of acting in bad faith.

3,6 Buenos Aires apparently seized upon the third-party mediation formula proposed by Chile in order to allay international fears that Argentina was preparing to attack. Last week, however, it publicly conditioned its acceptance on a prior round of strictly bilateral negotiations--a condition Chile is unwilling to accept.

1,6 Although the Argentine Ambassador to Chile has been recalled twice for high-level consultations, there is no evidence that serious efforts are under way to select a mediator. Argentina has hinted that it is willing to approach Spanish King Juan Carlos during his state visit later this month, but Santiago reportedly views the King as biased in Argentina's favor and, therefore, unacceptable.

4,6 Despite the apparent stalemate, Argentina's conditional acceptance of mediation indicates that President Videla is making every effort to defuse the issue. He is still under strong pressure, however, from conservative generals and younger officers to resort to arms if the impasse is not broken. Tensions reportedly have subsided somewhat, but both nations are maintaining their military forces in a high state of readiness. [Redacted]

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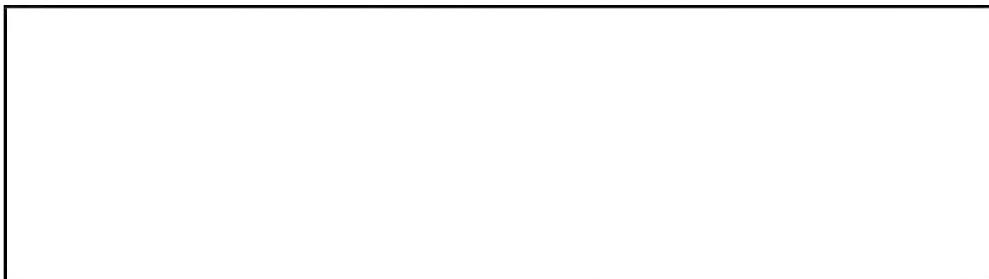
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In spite of Argentina's obvious military superiority, the Chileans apparently are willing to risk a brief clash rather than concede their territorial claims. Indeed, Santiago has become increasingly adamant in its refusal to compromise and its diplomats are pressing to take the issue back to The Hague for a new arbitration ruling. President Pinochet and his advisers know that they have strong international support and see the Argentine Government as becoming increasingly isolated by its own tactics.

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Cuba: Preparations for the Nonaligned Summit

Fidel Castro is already campaigning to persuade heads of state to attend the sixth nonaligned summit meeting in Havana next September. Castro knows that he has a major public relations job on his hands since several countries--Egypt, Senegal, and Yugoslavia among them--are questioning Cuba's nonaligned credentials because of its large military presence in Africa. As an obvious part of his campaign, Castro has dispatched Foreign Minister Isidoro Malmierca and two experts on nonaligned matters to Africa and the Middle East. The Cuban President also hopes to strengthen bilateral relations.

Malmierca and his group have already visited Madagascar, Tanzania, Mozambique, Ethiopia (a short stop), Sri Lanka and India, and next go to Afghanistan. The visits have followed a general pattern: Malmierca spends about four days in each country, meets with the head of state, visits schools or developmental projects with his counterpart, signs any cooperation protocols that have been previously negotiated, and issues a joint communique at the end of the stop. So far, the comm uniqueness have stressed similar themes. These include solidarity with southern African liberation groups, support for the Polisario Front, reunification of Korea, promotion of a new international economic order and the nonaligned movement's role in international affairs, and support for Havana as the site for the coming summit.

The Cubans' visits to Sri Lanka and India were probably somewhat sensitive. India was an especially active behind-the-scenes force for moderation at the Belgrade nonaligned meeting in August. It sided with countries such as Yugoslavia and Egypt to water down Cuba's attempts to radicalize the final communique. The best Malmierca could do during his visit was to sign agreements on technical and scientific cooperation and cultural exchanges, both of which had been negotiated about a week earlier. The Cubans feel that such agreements, especially those

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concluded with the major moderate members of the non-aligned movement, will be of some benefit in demonstrating Cuba's nonaligned status. At a press conference in Colombo, Malmierca portrayed Cuba as a victim of "China and the US who are leading a campaign to weaken the movement." He also made a vigorous call for defense of the objectives of the movement by all its members.

During the visit to Tanzania, which was scheduled well before the outbreak of fighting on the Ugandan border, Malmierca stressed at a press conference that "Tanzania had not sought military aid from Cuba to push back the Ugandan invaders." Malmierca waited until he was in Mozambique to condemn Ugandan aggression against Tanzania and to declare Cuba's support for the principle of territorial integrity.

The stop in Mozambique probably resulted in more work and less ceremony than the others because the foreign ministers' coordinating bureau will meet in Maputo in January. In addition, Malmierca met with representatives of Cuban internationalist contingents who are serving in Mozambique. Relations between the two countries are close, and they have just agreed on an extensive economic/technical cooperation package.

If Fidel Castro is to get a good turnout in Havana, where he hopes to assume tacit leadership of the non-aligned movement, he will probably try to project a moderate image, avoid controversy and accentuate the positive.

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Colombia: Favorable Prospects for Drug Control

President Turbay's firm personal commitment, and the recent actions of his government are encouraging signs in the campaign to halt Colombia's expanding illicit drug industry. Bogota's passage of a strict aviation-control law that includes shooting down aircraft violating restricted airspace and its increased enforcement actions in the Guajira drug center are a welcome contrast to the unfavorable drug-control climate that seemed to exist earlier this year.

During last summer's presidential campaign, Turbay was alleged to have connections with--or be politically indebted to--Colombian drug-smuggling syndicates. The main issue from the US point of view, however, was not whether Turbay was guilty or innocent, but whether as president he would subvert the drug-control cooperation between Washington and Bogota that had been initiated during his predecessor's administration. Press leaks and journalistic accounts of Turbay's allegedly "nefarious reputation" created an atmosphere of diplomatic sensitivity that also threatened to jeopardize bilateral drug-control relations.

As it turned out, however, several factors served to promote rather than to impede Bogota's anti-narcotics program. First, the attention focused on Turbay and on Colombia by international and local media forced the new president to take a strong stand--not only to vindicate his personal reputation, but also to polish his country's tarnished image. Second, Turbay--who is an astute politician--undoubtedly recognized the importance that Washington attaches to the problem of international drug smuggling. If for no other reasons, he took advantage of the drug issue to demonstrate his political leadership at home and to boost his political standing abroad. Finally, and most important, the anti-narcotics program in Colombia has gained momentum for a reason that may be incongruous to many--namely, that Turbay genuinely believes the drug problem is a serious threat to the social, economic, and even political fabric of his country's democratic government.

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Turbay's beliefs are not necessarily inconsistent with the fact that previous charges against him might conceivably be true. Even if he has personally benefited in the past or continues to profit from the drug trade at present, his present political position demands that he serve the interests of his country and his people.

Turbay perceives that the drug industry has drawn untold thousands out of the productive work force and made them dependent on a black market economy that spawns inflation and robs Bogota of taxable legal revenues. At the same time, the drug trade breeds additional lawlessness that adversely affects Colombia's already deteriorating internal security. In addition, the virtual autonomy of some drug trafficking regions--particularly the Guajira peninsula, where the majority of Colombian marijuana is cultivated--poses a serious political threat to the central government.

Turbay undoubtedly intends to follow through on his "crusade" against drugs, but not necessarily in a mutual drug-control program that also serves US interests. The extent to which he will continue to cooperate with the US may depend on his perception of Washington's willingness to cooperate with him.

Turbay, who is independent and strong-willed, refers to the present drug campaign as the "war of the two peninsulas"--referring to the Guajira peninsula in Colombia and to Florida in the US. He clearly expects that while he moves against the Guajira region, US authorities will take simultaneous steps against the drug industry that flourishes in southern Florida. He also expects that if the US Coast Guard is allowed to board and search Colombian-flag ships suspected of transporting marijuana and other drugs in international waters, then Colombian authorities will be granted similar leeway by Washington to conduct enforcement actions against US-registered planes and ships operating illegally in Colombia.

Officials in Colombia and other South American countries have frequently been puzzled by what they regard as an inconsistency between the foreign and domestic drug policies of the US--specifically, the

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disparity between US desires to see harsh drug penalties imposed in other countries while promoting "decriminalization" laws at home. Colombia's present momentum in the drug-control area, and Turbay's inclination to take bold and innovative measures against drug smuggling, may well be dependent, at least to a degree, on a demonstration of similar resolve from other countries.

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